

# THE WALL-PAINTINGS IN ST LAWRENCE'S CHURCH, BROUGHTON

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*In addition to collating the existing literature on the fifteenth-century wall-paintings in St Lawrence's Church, Broughton (not to be confused with those at the village of that name in Oxfordshire), the present paper draws attention to the literary background of the Pietà, directed against blasphemers, and points out the several special features of the Doom which do not appear previously to have received the emphasis they deserve. It is, however, the two wall-paintings on the south wall of the nave, the upper of which is usually described as representing St Helena and possibly St Eloi, upon which the present paper concentrates. It argues that the identification of St Eloi cannot be correct, and suggests that St James the Less is more likely. It is further suggested that it is the lower painting which could be expected to have been of St Eloi. The identification of St Helena is also suspect, and the suggestion is made that 'she' might originally have been St Philip the Apostle.*

The nave of the church of St Lawrence, Broughton, dates from c.1330, except for its windows, which were inserted c.1390<sup>1</sup>. After having been under whitewash since the Reformation, wall-paintings of the fifteenth century were uncovered in 1848<sup>2</sup>, and the first article about them appeared the year after, when a report was received by the Archaeological Institute from a Mr Ferrey of this 'interesting discovery'<sup>3</sup>. In 1880-81 the church was 'drastically restored'<sup>4</sup>.

### *The Doom*

To deal first with the paintings on the north wall of the nave, there is, opposite the south door, a Last Judgement, or Doom, which contains most of the usual ingredients, with the Heavenly City high up on the spectator's left, and the Hell-mouth low down on the right, and indeed some features not usually included. Thus, St Michael, in his 'feathered warrior' guise, popular in England<sup>5</sup>, is shown in the top right-hand corner. He would be sufficiently unusual in a Doom wall-painting even if he were carrying out his normal, but usually separately represented, function of Soul-weighing, but in this case he is merely wielding

the sword with which he traditionally overcame the Devil. Soul-weighing is in fact taking place in the middle foreground, where 'the B.V.M. is influencing the balance by pressure of her hand and rosary'<sup>6</sup> in accordance with the uncanonical miracle attributed to her in the late thirteenth-century *Golden Legend*. The description of the wall-paintings at present (1985) hanging in the church claims that 'a Soul is being weighed in its Tomb'. This would be remarkable if it were so, but as the soul in the tomb is *above* the balance-arm of the scales, the present writer does not think this suggestion is a physical possibility, and he believes that this soul is merely part of the portrayal of the general Resurrection. It is, however, a minor oddity in a Doom that a soul should be shown as resurrecting from a tomb rather than from the usual grave. Caiger-Smith states that Dooms tended to omit the Soul-weighing 'for it was coming to contradict the idea of the relentless Judgement', and in his view it is only in this 'haphazard, rustic, 15th-century picture at Broughton . . . does the Virgin actually appear beside the balance to alter the Judgement'; he also points out that this is one of the cases where she is shown as the Virgin of the Mantle,

in that 'in her robe she shelters the souls of men who paid her especial honour in their lifetime.'<sup>7</sup> It will be noted that St Michael appears twice in this Doom, since it must be he who is the winged figure holding the scales just to the left of Hell-mouth—not that the medieval artist saw anything odd in what is now called 'continuous representation'.<sup>8</sup>

Christ in this painting also differs from the norm; His robes are not flung back in the usual way to exhibit the wounds on His bare torso, hands, and feet, but are gathered round Him so that not even His hands can be seen. Instead of the usual rainbow-throne (the rainbow being taken from the story of Noah to symbolise the 'pardon and the reconciliation given to the human race by God')<sup>9</sup>, He is seated on what appears to be a substantial throne (though without the world as His footstool, as is usually the case) which may even be part of the facade of the Heavenly City, on the battlements of which is a figure which should be that of St Peter, though not in his usual place at the gates of the Heavenly City, welcoming the Blessed. No doubt in an endeavour to explain these anomalies the *V.C.H. Bucks* makes the somewhat surprising suggestion that the figure enthroned in front of the Heavenly City is not Christ, but God the Father, and that it is Christ Who is on the battlements<sup>10</sup>. This quite unprecedented interpretation is not adopted by other writers on this subject and need not, it is thought, be further considered.

Of even greater interest than these departures from the normal iconography of Dooms is the fact that, instead of this Doom being presided over by the usual centrally-placed Christ, at Broughton He is well to the left of the composition. 'In the 14th and 15th centuries the normal position for the Doom was above the chancel arch, since it symbolised the division between this world and the next'<sup>11</sup>, and where this is so it is inevitable that the figure of Christ should be placed in the middle of the painting, immediately above the apex of the arch, the naturally dominant position for Him as Judge. Here, however, the artist was subject to no such structural limitations, and perhaps the mere fact of his having a large unimpeded rectangle

at his disposal encouraged him, or his patron, to experiment. This aspect of the Doom has not been mentioned by previous writers, but to the present one it seems the most important aspect of this unconventional Doom. He would be surprised if it were not unique in English medieval wall-painting.

Another aspect of the Doom which has escaped previous notice is the object to the right of the Virgin, looking like a carpet in the process of being rolled up, so as to put one in mind of Revelation 6:14, which, also dealing with the end of the world, says 'and the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together.' Perhaps, however, it is only the remains of some post-Reformation painting (of which there are several examples elsewhere in the church) not entirely removed by the restorers.

Immediately above the outspread wings of the angel sounding the Last Trump is the lower part of a figure in a red robe, the skirt of which is being blown to the left over a bare leg and foot, but in so unusual a Doom as this it is impossible to conjecture what significance this figure might originally have had.

Though several of the Damned can still be seen in the Hell-mouth, none of the Blessed can now be positively identified. Nor are there any of the usual full-length naked souls resurrecting, but it is thought that, in addition to the soul in the tomb already mentioned, the Resurrection is represented by the five heads in the middle of the Doom, portrayed, like him, as if their graves were indeed their beds.

The Doom is painted in the usual range of muted earth-colours, so as to be compatible with the lime in the plaster on which they were painted. The somewhat disparaging views of Caiger-Smith on its style have already been quoted, but a more damaging opinion of it, and indeed of all the other wall-paintings at Broughton, is expressed in the unpublished Bardswell/Tristram typescripts, where it is said that 'like the rest of the work in the church, the subject has been inaccurately repainted in almost every part.'<sup>12</sup> Despite this, the several special features which have been mentioned

above give the Doom an exceptional interest among English medieval wall-paintings of this subject.

#### *The Pietà and the Blasphemers*

Also on the north wall of the nave, and to the east of the Doom, is a wall-painting<sup>13</sup> surrounded by a deep border, with a pattern on three of its sides reminiscent of the canopy-valancing of an old-fashioned railway-station. In the middle of the painting is a Pietà, the dead body of Christ across His mother's knees.

Paintings of this subject are infrequent, the only legible example of it which the present writer has seen being at Hornton, Oxfordshire, but the special feature of the Broughton version is that the two central figures are surrounded by young gallants who are engaged in dismembering Christ's body. It was pointed out by Ferrey that this was 'opposed to the sacred text'<sup>14</sup>, by which he must have meant John 19:36 which, when dealing with the state of Christ's body after the crucifixion, says 'for these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken.' The *Gentleman's Magazine*, reporting the same meeting of the Archaeological Institute, made the same point<sup>15</sup>; and Wall described the painting as 'uncanonical, if not heretical'<sup>16</sup>. The medieval artist, or his patron, evidently thought however that it was worth risking heresy for the sake of pointing his moral, and portrays the youth at the bottom right-hand corner of the painting, for example, as holding Christ's detached foot, and the other young men as holding other parts of His anatomy, such as the heart, a hand, and various bones; one of them is possibly holding the Host. In addition to the seven youths so employed, two more are seated facing each other in the middle foreground with, between them, a board marked out in long rectangles, as if for some sort of game such as backgammon. These two are evidently quarrelling, the one on the left having drawn his dagger, while the other is holding a long blue-bladed sword. It is indeed the swords carried by most of the young men which, together with their parti-coloured hose, provide what little colour remains in this painting. *Recs. Bucks* states that it was finally established by 1922, on the authority of that

great antiquarian, Dr M. R. James, the Provost of Eton, that the true meaning of the painting was that 'it represents the injury done to the Body of Christ by those who swear by God's wounds, God's bones, etc., a common medieval habit.'<sup>17</sup> Dr James later put this interpretation into writing<sup>18</sup>.

As to the dating of the painting, Tristram dealt with it in his volume on the fourteenth century<sup>19</sup>, so that he must have differed from the majority in dating this painting to that century rather than the fifteenth.

The painting has already been so well covered by authority that the present writer would not have thought it necessary to have pursued it further, were it not for the fact that much enlightenment is to be found on the literary background to this Morality in a source not quoted by previous writers, doubtless because it has no apparent connection with wall-paintings, namely, Rosemary Woolf's *English Religious Lyrics of the Middle Ages* (1968), Appendix G. There the point of the Morality is summarised as 'the blasphemy of swearing [is used] to suggest the far greater blasphemy of their attempted usurpation of Christ's powers as conqueror of death.' This author draws attention to the fact that the subject of such pictures as the Broughton Pietà might almost be regarded as illustrating passages in Chaucer's *Pardoner's Tale* which she quotes, of which the one specifically referring to the dismemberment of Christ's body is:

And many a grisly ooth thanne han they sworn;  
And Cristes blessed body they to-rente,<sup>20</sup>

It may be added that there is another passage in *The Pardoner's Tale*, too long to be quoted here, about oaths leading to a quarrel over a dicing game, ending with a dagger being drawn<sup>21</sup>, just as is illustrated in the middle foreground at Broughton.

It would appear from Miss Woolf's visual examples that the Broughton painting, which she describes, represents the Morality in its simplest form, whereas she mentions a similar painting at Corby, Lincolnshire, which also included scrolls on which the words of the various oaths were thought to have been origin-



Plate I. Fifteenth-century wall-painting at St Lawrence's Church, Broughton. Left, the Saint hitherto identified as St Helena, now thought to have been originally St Philip the Apostle. Right, the Saint tentatively identified as St Eloi, but now suggested to be more probably St James the Less. (Photo: J. Edwards, 1985).



Plate II. Nineteenth-century wall-tablet largely obliterating what is thought to be the site of a fifteenth-century wall-painting of St Eloi. (Photo: J. Edwards, 1985).

ally inscribed, though they are no longer legible; she adds that the Corby painting has been fully dealt with by Dr. E. Clive Rouse<sup>22</sup>. Miss Woolf points out, however, that the most complete development of this subject was to be found in the stained glass formerly at Heydon Church, Norwich, where there are not only all the elements included at Corby, but in addition a scene showing the blasphemers in Hell, and a complaint of the Virgin in verse.

As to the aesthetic aspects of the painting, Caiger-Smith considered that by the time it was painted these Moralities had become 'little more than didactic diagrams, the pictorial qualities having disappeared in the face of the meaning.'<sup>23</sup>

#### *St Christopher*

Still on the north wall of the nave, the Bardswell/Tristram typescripts mention, to the east of the Pieta, a 'St. Christopher, against a diapered background', of which 'the head and the lower part of the figure are destroyed, and little may now be discerned of the remainder.'<sup>24</sup> It is no doubt for these reasons that it is not mentioned by other writers, save for Dr Rouse<sup>25</sup>. To-day, though the organ is obstructive, vestiges of a red robe can still be made out, and two oval patches of plaster where the heads might have been.

#### *St George and the Dragon*

Coming now to the paintings on the south wall of the nave, what must once have been a magnificent St George bestrides the south door, the dragon being in the bottom left-hand corner and the Princess with her fellow-sacrifice, a sheep, in the top left. The usual wall of the city of Silene, in Libya<sup>26</sup>, outside which the fight took place, with the King and Queen watching from the safety of its battlements, is not now to be seen, if indeed it were ever there. Unfortunately the Saint's head has disappeared, as a result, no doubt, of the usual roof-repairs. The painting is reproduced in *R.C.H.M. Bucks*<sup>27</sup>, the photograph showing less of the painting than is now visible.

#### *St Helena and St Eloi*

The wall-paintings which are the principal

subject of this paper are to the east of the St George. To begin with them as they now are, the upper painting (Plate I) is separated from the lower one by a band of diagonal lines of the same pattern as is used to separate the south door from the lower edge of the St George painting. The other three sides of the upper painting have a deep border bearing a scroll design interspersed with a leaf pattern described as modern by the *R.C.H.M. Bucks*<sup>28</sup>. The painting represents two persons, both saints since they both have haloes, standing on a little hillock. The one on the left is conspicuous for holding a cross in the form of a T, usually known as a Tau-cross, after the Greek word for that letter. The cross is large enough in this case to come up to her head, for the person holding it in her right hand is a young girl, who has a book in the other. She wears a white tunic, the hem-line of which is drawn in such a way as may be meant to indicate that it is trimmed with ermine. Over the tunic she wears a long blue mantle. Her head is bare and her hair falls freely to a considerable length, coming down to knee-level. She looks away from her companion, who is a bishop—it is less likely that he is an archbishop, as he is not wearing the pallium—since he has some sort of mitre and holds a crozier in his left hand. It is however no ordinary crozier, since the staff is by no means straight in its lower length, while its top is not in the form of the usual crook, but is oval with a small cross in the middle. The saint is holding out his right hand in blessing. His vestments comprise a red chasuble over a white alb. The background of the painting as a whole is diapered with stylised flowers in the form of five dots in a circle with a sixth in the middle.

Any attempt to describe the painting (Plate II) below the one just dealt with is greatly handicapped by the fact that only the outer edges of it are still visible, the middle part, which would doubtless have rendered the whole subject-matter self-evident, being now obscured by a nineteenth-century wall-monument to the Cowley family. Beginning at the top of the painting, immediately below the band of diagonal lines already mentioned, there are, reading from left to right, two small bucket-shaped objects, possibly padlocks or even

stirrups; the top of something like the sort of easel used in a class-room to rest a blackboard on; and at least two horseshoes. On the left-hand side of the wall-monument there is an upright claw-headed hammer and a set-square with one arm horizontal, while the other leads downwards from the right-hand end of the first. To the right of the wall-monument there is, first, another of the bucket-shaped objects and below it the head and forelegs and a small portion of the front of the body of a horse, painted with great naturalness and freedom, showing the horse with one foot in the air and the other on the ground but at an angle to it. Below the monument there are, on the left, some indefinable vertical objects, and then what looks like nothing so much as an inverted tin bath, with some sort of grille behind it. On the right is what may be a broom, while below it are two large hammers. All the objects already described in this painting have the same background colour of very pale pink. Below this area are three red rectangles placed vertically, but as these are part of the general scheme of decoration, most clearly seen below the Pietà and the windows on either side of it, they need not be further considered.

It may next be useful to consider the history of the identification of the two paintings. In 1849 Mr Ferrey had no difficulty in recognising the man in the upper painting as a bishop and described the other as 'a female, with dishevelled hair, holding a cross', but in neither case did he attempt to name them, nor did he comment at all on the lower painting<sup>29</sup>. The *R.C.H.M. Bucks* identified the figures in the upper painting as 'St. Helena, and . . . a bishop, probably St. Eloi . . . figures much renovated . . .' A horse with a rider is attributed to the lower painting 'possibly of an earlier date than the painting above it, but almost destroyed by a 19th-century memorial tablet set in the middle.'<sup>30</sup> It is impossible nowadays to account for this identification; the undoubted horse on the right of the wall-monument has no rider, and it is questionable whether the positioning of the monument would leave him visible even if there had been a rider originally. On the left of the monument, however, the quite fortuitous arrangement of the hammer and set-

square might have suggested a horse's forelegs, and one of the various rounded objects the rider's head. Wall referred only to the lower painting, but thought it came within the category of a Christ of the Trades, that is, Christ clad only in a loincloth, His body covered with wounds and surrounded by all sorts of tools, a high proportion of which have cutting edges. Wall was, however, writing at a time when it was still the received opinion that such a painting would exemplify what he called 'the truth that "To Labour is to Pray".'<sup>31</sup>

Though only the Pietà was included in the Catalogue of Tristram's volume on the fourteenth century, he refers to the lower painting in the introductory chapters where, repeating a view he had held since 1917, he said that at Broughton 'there is, or was, a painting of Christ mounted, perhaps as Langland's "Jesus the Jouster" . . .'<sup>32</sup> The modern interpretation, however, based on a contemporary German manuscript and a fifteenth-century painting and inscription, in San Miniato, Florence, is that a Christ of the Trades picture meant that working on the Sabbath actually wounded Christ physically on much the same lines as did the blasphemies already mentioned in relation to the Pietà; for the full argument, reference may be made to Caiger-Smith<sup>33</sup>. Like him, the present writer views the modern theory with some regret, not only out of respect for the leading figure in the field of medieval wall-paintings that Tristram undoubtedly was, but also because it overlooks that the absolute prohibition of Sabbath labour was not in fact part of Christ's teaching.

*Recs. Bucks* says that the upper painting is 'of St. Eloy, the patron of farriers, with blacksmith's tools, and a man on horseback, also a figure of Queen Helena (mother of Constantine) with the TAU cross. Mr C. E. Keyser says there was a guild of farriers at Broughton, hence this picture of St. Eloy.'<sup>34</sup> It will be noted that, by bringing in the man on horseback, referred to by Tristram as being in the lower painting, this account treated the upper and lower paintings as if they were parts of the same picture. *V.C.H. Bucks* refers to St Helena and 'a bishop, perhaps St. Eloi'. St Helena's robe is

described as green, whereas today it is blue. Here, too, reference is made to the horse and rider 'almost entirely hidden by a modern memorial tablet'<sup>35</sup>.

The extent to which Tristram's published works deal with the two paintings has already been mentioned in relation to his theory on the aspect of Christ postulated by Langland in *Piers Plowman*, but the unpublished Notebooks of his collaborator, Mrs M. Bardswell, also deal with the upper painting. Her notes begin by suggesting 'an Archbishop or Bishop—? St. Dunstan and a female saint ? St. Helena' and finish with what are apparently the views of Tristram himself, since the latter pages are headed by his initials. These are that the female saint was St Helena, though it is of interest that she then had 'long yellow hair' instead of the dark brown hair of to-day. As to the bishop, though it is mentioned that he had 'no distinguishing attribute', he is assumed to be St Eloi because of the nature of the tools in the lower painting, as to which the following new identifications are mentioned: 'keys . . . anvil . . . box of tools.'<sup>36</sup> The Bardswell/Tristram typescript, however, adds some details as to St Helena, specifying the cross to be a Tau, and describing what has been called, above, her tunic, as a 'houppeland with a wide hem of ermine' and her mantle as 'grey-green', whereas nowadays it is blue. The importance of the typescript (which can be expected to represent the considered view) is however that it resiles from even a queried identification of the bishop as St Eloi and restricts itself to saying 'the bishop, clad in Mass vestments, carrying a crozier, bears no distinguishing attribute.'<sup>37</sup>

To bring this summary of authorities up to date, Pevsner describes the two paintings as 'St. Helena and St. Eloy(?). Below, tools of the farriers whose patron saint St. Eloy is.'<sup>38</sup> Unlike the Doom and Pietà paintings, these two paintings are not mentioned in the text of Caiger-Smith's book, and the Selective Catalogue, with which it concludes, merely says of them: 'St. Helena and St. Eloi; . . . paintings of blacksmith's tools, 15th century.'<sup>39</sup>

It may next be desirable to give some brief

details of the two saints said to be portrayed in the upper painting. They were both persons for whose existence there is historical evidence and neither were martyrs, so that there are these two immediate differences between them and those saints, such as SS. Catherine of Alexandria, Christopher, and Margaret of Antioch, whose portraits are most often to be found in English medieval wall-painting. St Helena (or Helen) lived from c.255 to c.330 and was the mother of the Emperor Constantine the Great. After being converted to Christianity she visited the Holy Land in her old age and became credited, rightly or wrongly, with the discovery of the True Cross. St Eloi (or Eligius) lived from c.588 to 660. He was an engraver and a smith and some of the works, such as reliquaries, attributed to him still exist. He became Bishop of Noyon and Tournai, in France, in 641. The fact of his being the patron saint of smiths and farriers has already been mentioned<sup>40</sup>.

#### *St Eloi?*

To deal first with the bishop, it is of some importance that Tristram finally decided not to offer any identification. It would have been of great interest if Mrs. Bardswell had given her reasons for putting forward even the possibility that the bishop might be St Dunstan, and why she later abandoned the idea. Of those writers who have suggested that the bishop might be St Eloi, most have done so in studiously guarded terms; indeed the only two who do so unequivocally are *Recs. Bucks* and Caiger-Smith. Where the others are concerned, there is a tendency, having regard to the saint being the patron of smiths and farriers, to rely on the contents of the lower painting, but it is noteworthy that none put forward any element in the actual picture of the saint to establish him as St Eloi. Moreover, it is scarcely logical to use the lower painting to identify one of the characters in the upper painting, but not both. The present writer believes that there is no warrant for the presumption that the upper and lower paintings can be related; they are separated by as definite a boundary as that which divides St George from the church door, and must consequently, in his view, be regarded as self-contained. That being so, any evidence in support of the bishop being St Eloi should be



sought only in the painting in which the bishop appears.

An identification with St Eloi is not strengthened by the presence of another figure in the picture. St Eloi is not associated with any other saint as, for example, St Peter is linked with St Paul; and if the other figure be indeed St Helena, she is by tradition already paired with another person, namely, her son Constantine, who is himself a saint in the eyes of the Greek Orthodox Church, though only beatified by the Roman one<sup>41</sup>. There can be no question of the bishop at Broughton being intended to represent Constantine; such an inclusion would be quite unknown in English medieval wall-painting, and in any event he is not shown with any of the trappings of imperial power.

That wall-paintings of St Eloi are rare is a factor which must carry some weight, in the absence of any other identification. He is not mentioned in Kendon's statistical analysis of Keyser's *List of Buildings Having Mural Decorations* (1883)<sup>42</sup>, while Caiger-Smith's Catalogue (admittedly only a selective one) mentions but three examples, including Broughton<sup>43</sup>. The present writer has seen all of them: the one at Shorthampton, Oxfordshire, is now, sadly, vestigial, but was described and illustrated by Johnston in 1905 when most of it could still be made out<sup>44</sup>, while that at Slapton, Northamptonshire, was still perfectly legible when the present writer last visited it in 1978. Both of them—perhaps precisely because the saint has no emblem—positively identify St Eloi by showing him performing his best-known miracle, that of removing the leg from the body of an unruly horse, shoeing it, and replacing the leg, all without any injury to the horse. It would be strange if, in the circumstances, a similar iconography had not been followed at Broughton.

There is a detail in the painting of the bishop which may be of help; the staff of the crozier (if that is what it is) has a distinct curve in its lower portion. It cannot be imagined that St Eloi, a master-craftsman of such calibre that he was entrusted with the making of reliquaries, would use any crozier the staff of which was not

absolutely straight.

For all these reasons, it is suggested that whoever the bishop might be, he cannot be St Eloi.

What is wanted is a saint who was a bishop and whose emblem was a staff with a curve in its lower portion, and despite these exacting requirements they are in fact fulfilled in the case of the Apostle, St James the Less. He is usually assumed, though there is some doubt about it, to be the same person as the St James who became the first bishop of Jerusalem, and who was martyred by blows from a fuller's club, or bat, and whose emblem this implement consequently became<sup>45</sup>. Fulling was the final process in spinning and weaving, intended to give 'body' to the cloth by impregnating it with, usually, fuller's earth; 'when the fulling was completed the cloth was washed in a vat or in a stream and then beaten with sticks to increase the adhesion of the constituent fibres.'<sup>46</sup> When the fuller's club features as St James's emblem it 'varies from a short knotted club to a long club not unlike a hockey-stick, while at other times it is simply a flat bat.'<sup>47</sup> The suggestion is therefore that the staff borne by the bishop at Broughton is a sophisticated version of the 'hockey-stick' type of fuller's club which has been elegantly assimilated with a bishop's crozier. To complete the picture, as Bishop of Jerusalem, James 'may wear episcopal robes, with mitre and crozier.'<sup>48</sup>

While the present writer would be the first to agree that suggestions of this nature can never be the subject of absolute proof, the foregoing arguments in favour of the bishop being St James the Less are not without their attraction, and have a good deal more to be said in their favour than his identification with St Eloi.

#### *Did St Eloi feature at Broughton?*

Before finally leaving this saint, it may be as well to deal with the grounds for thinking that he was portrayed at Broughton performing the miracle of the unruly horse, as at Slapton and Shorthampton, but is now obliterated by the Cowley wall-monument. It has already been suggested that to show the saint performing this miracle may well have been necessary because

he had no personal emblem; moreover, any miracle seemed to have its own attraction to the medieval mind.

In its present state, the Slapton painting is extremely austere; it merely shows the bishop and another person—either an assistant or the owner of the horse—together with the horse itself; perhaps any more detail was obliterated by the painting of St Anne instructing the Virgin which is very near to it. The Shorthampton version, as copied by Johnston in 1905, was more detailed, showing not only the saint, the horse, and someone Johnston positively identified as the horse's owner, but also the saint's smithy and the flue over it, together with horseshoes on the wall. It is suggested that the greater variety of smith's paraphernalia (among which even what has been called a tin bath would be in context, a tank of water being an essential part of the smithing process<sup>49</sup>) at Broughton is merely a logical extension of what was included at Shorthampton; there was no need to have confused it with a Christ of the Trades, since the tools at Broughton do not include any with cutting edges. A feature both Shorthampton and Slapton have in common is that in both cases the horse is standing inside a sort of wooden scaffolding not unlike a medieval version of one of the stalls forming the starting-gate at a modern race-course. The medieval arrangement is most clearly shown in a marginal illustration to a manuscript by the Flemish illustrator, Jehan de Grise, from the *Romance of Alexander* (1338-1344, MS Bodley 264, fo. 107r.), which incidentally demonstrates that those smiths who were not miracle-workers could achieve much the same result by upending the horse's hoof and tying it to a cross-bar conveniently provided. Reference has already been made to the piece of apparatus shown in the Broughton painting, the top part of which can be seen over the upper edge of the wall-monument, and which looks like the upper part of a blackboard-easel. This, it is suggested, is the top of the sort of horse-pen being used in the other two wall-paintings already cited. The saint and the unruly horse, drawn on the same scale as the horse, the front portion of which can be seen on the right of the wall-monument,

must therefore have been below this framework and consequently were obliterated when the monument was put up.

The present writer's scepticism about the horse and rider referred to by so many of his predecessors has already been expressed, but the horse's neck and forelegs on the right of the monument could be a 'continuous representation' of the unruly horse, trotting off after having just been the subject of the miracle.

None of this derogates in any way from Keyser's report of the existence of a local guild of farriers, while the foregoing interpretation avoids the necessity of identifying the bishop in the upper painting by a quite unwarranted reference to the lower one, and also assimilates what was once, before the erection of the wall-monument, the representation of St Eloi at Broughton to the only other known wall-paintings of the saint elsewhere.

#### *St Helena reconsidered*

Notwithstanding the acceptance by most previous writers of the identification of the other saint in the upper painting as St Helena, this too, must, in the opinion of the present writer, be open to doubt. In the first place, St Helena was far from being the young girl depicted at Broughton, with her extremely long hair unbound, and her head bare of the imperial insignia such as would have befitted the mother of a Roman Emperor. The saint was in fact 'usually portrayed as an elderly matron, regally dressed and wearing a crown.'<sup>50</sup> This alone would be enough to disqualify the damsel at Broughton from being St Helena, but, in addition, the saint's only claim to fame was the discovery of the True Cross, and 'tradition says that Christ was crucified on a Latin cross', that is, a cross having 'a longer upright than cross-bar. The intersection of the two is usually such that the upper and the two horizontal arms are all of about equal length, but the lower arm is conspicuously longer.'<sup>51</sup> On the contrary, the cross here is a Tau-cross.

It must, however, be said immediately that there is one authority, the Rev. R. L. P. Milburn, who says that St Helena 'usually

appears wearing a crown and holding a long cross, but is sometimes shown with a short T-cross and book'<sup>52</sup>; this assertion will have to be given due consideration. Even though Milburn mentions a Tau-cross, distinctions can be drawn between the one shown in his line-drawing of St Helena (which has no caption to indicate its provenance) and that in the painting at Broughton; in the first place, the Broughton one is life-size, rather than 'short', and secondly, the one in the line-drawing is more like a portable lectern on which a book has indeed been placed, but the lectern's horizontal arms have scrolls beneath them, which is quite conceivable in the case of a lectern, but is a feature never seen in a true Tau-, or any other sort of, cross.

Moreover, in addition to these factual discrepancies, Milburn's association of St Helena with a short Tau-cross receives no support from any of the works on saints and their emblems consulted by the present writer, namely, those by Attwater<sup>53</sup>; Baring-Gould<sup>54</sup>; Braunfels<sup>55</sup>; Daniel and Berger<sup>56</sup>; Dunbar<sup>57</sup>; Farmer<sup>58</sup>; Ferguson<sup>59</sup>; Hall<sup>60</sup>; and Réau. In the last-mentioned case, the 15th-century painting of the French School, region of Valenciennes<sup>61</sup>, reproduced to illustrate Réau's article on St Helena, shows the True Cross looking like one of the Tau variety, but on closer examination it is seen to have, pointing upwards in the middle of its horizontal cross-bar, the tenon of a mortice-and-tenon joint, showing that the artist believed that this was how the upper member of the Latin cross was joined to its cross-bar, but that the two had become detached.

Lastly, Milburn's Foreword says 'most of the books which deal with the subject of saints and their emblems are based on F. C. Husenbeth's *Emblems of Saints*', but the latter, in his article on St 'Helen', says nothing about one of her emblems being the Tau-cross<sup>62</sup>. In all the circumstances, not least the factual differences between the painting and Milburn's line-drawing, it would seem that his remark as to St Helena and the Tau-cross can safely be discounted.

Of the medieval wall-paintings of St Helena

in this country, only three are included in Caiger-Smith's Catalogue<sup>63</sup>, of which one is the Broughton example, the others being at Chalgrove and Kidlington, both in Oxfordshire. Fortunately, since a recent (1985) visit showed that to-day only the saint's face is still to be seen, Chalgrove is preserved in reproduction in *Archaeologia*<sup>64</sup>, which shows the saint crowned and with her emblem, the Latin 'cross which she carries in her arms', as described in Réau<sup>65</sup>. Even more massive deterioration has overtaken the example at Kidlington, so as to make it now (1985) indecipherable.

The dissimilarities between the girl in the Broughton painting and the crowned, matronly, Roman Empress-Mother, carrying her Latin cross, and between the life-size Tau-cross and the True (Latin) Cross are so considerable as to confirm the view of the present writer that it cannot be St Helena who is portrayed at Broughton.

#### *St Philip the Apostle?*

The difficulty of suggesting who the saint might be, if not St Helena, is augmented by the fact that there is apparently no saint represented as a girl holding a life-size Tau-cross. Since, however, no would-be interpreter of medieval wall-paintings can be certain that what is now seen is what was originally painted, this difficulty is not insuperable, particularly as there are two male saints whose emblem the Tau-cross was. St Anthony need only be mentioned to be discarded; not only is he normally depicted as an old man with a long beard, but his emblem takes the form, not of an actual Tau-cross, but one in which this sort of cross is shown as an heraldic symbol fastened to his cloak just below shoulder-level.

More promising is St Philip the Apostle who, according to Réau, is 'often associated with St James the Less', as is indeed still the case in a number of English church-dedications, notably that of G. E. Street's 'Cathedral of North Oxford', now sadly closed. Réau adds that St Philip can be portrayed 'sometimes bearded, sometimes beardless'<sup>66</sup>. Though it is true that Réau does not mention the Tau-cross in

relation to St Philip, it is specifically referred to as one of this saint's emblems by Baring-Gould<sup>67</sup>; Braunfels<sup>68</sup>; Ferguson<sup>69</sup>; Hall<sup>70</sup>; and Husenbeth<sup>71</sup>. All except Husenbeth mention that the use of the Tau-cross in the case of St Philip is occasional, while Baring-Gould and Hall think it would be used on a staff. Ferguson suggests that its use as St Philip's emblem derives from the version of the saint's history which describes him as having been martyred upon a Tau-cross.

In order to apply this identification to the girl in the painting at Broughton it has to be supposed that those who uncovered the paintings in 1848 found what was in reality one of the beardless types of St Philip holding his Tau-cross and with hair reaching to his shoulders. It has further to be supposed that—not having the advantages of modern scholarship in the form of the authorities just mentioned—they knew of no saint associated with a cross other than St Helena. They might thus feel that the saint they had uncovered looked a little mannish for the role of St Helena; and in this connection it will be remembered that one of the earliest accounts of the discovery described the hair, not as extremely long, which is now its most striking feature, but as 'dishevelled'<sup>72</sup>. To emphasise that the saint was, as they thought, a woman, the 'restorers', believing no doubt quite sincerely that they were merely underlining what had originally been intended, can be supposed to have made their identification of St Helena quite certain by lengthening the hair to an excessive degree.

That this would be but a modest case of what Victorian 'restorers' were capable of doing is illustrated by the present writer's paper on the 'restoration' of the wall-paintings at South Leigh, Oxfordshire<sup>73</sup>, where, when medieval wall-paintings were uncovered in 1872, a complete fifteenth-century Soul-weighing was obliterated as part of the 'restoration' and covered with a new painting of the same subject, but almost twice as large. Moreover, the 'restorers' were so self-confident that they allowed the local Architectural and Historical Society to pay a visit to the church when this operation was only partially completed; the

Society's only criticism was that modern inscriptions had been added to the Doom. Compared to this, the lengthening of 'St Helena's' hair so as to reinforce the supposed likeness to a woman would be a very venial alteration indeed. Had the same alacrity in effecting the transformation been observed at Broughton as had been the case at South Leigh, the work would have been completed before the experts (as opposed to the amateurs of the local Society) could come on the scene; in the case of South Leigh, J. G. Waller was, within a year of the uncovering, already too late to discover what had actually happened<sup>74</sup>, and so might have been Mr Ferrey, writing a year after the discovery at Broughton.

That there have been more recent alterations at Broughton is confirmed by the changes in colour of the hair from yellow to dark brown, and of the mantle from green to blue, already mentioned. On the matter as a whole, the *R.C.H.M. Bucks*' remark 'figures much renovated' may be germane, while the Bardswell/Tristram observation on the Doom at Broughton is also worth recalling, that 'like the rest of the work in the church, the subject has been inaccurately repainted in almost every part'. But Tristram himself was not above taking steps which would be abhorrent to the modern conservator, such as adding the missing heads of St Christopher and the Christ-child at Woodeaton, Oxfordshire, but at least his pastiche there is well-known and documented<sup>75</sup>.

There remains the question of the book, mentioned in the general description and in Milburn, as being held by the saint. The attributes of a book, however, are so various, according to whether it is associated with Christ, or His mother, or with a multiplicity of saints, that it has no special significance as such. As Milburn says, a book is 'not a distinctive emblem'<sup>76</sup>. It could as well be carried by St Philip, a martyred Apostle, as by many another saint.

While St Philip is of course included in wall-paintings of the Apostles as a whole, which are not uncommon (for example, in the churches at Chalgrave, Hardham, Kempley, Salisbury (St

Thomas), and Stowell), it cannot be contended that there are other wall-paintings of this saint as an individual which are either listed in Caiger-Smith or otherwise known to the present writer. Three churches in Norfolk having screen-paintings of him as such are however cited in the *Oxford Dictionary of Saints*.<sup>77</sup>

It is realised that the proposal that the St Helena at Broughton was originally St Philip is entirely conjectural and incapable of absolute proof. It is, however, suggested that, having reached the identification of St Philip and St James the Less by independent paths, supported in each case by authority, the fact that this results in two saints who, unlike St Helena and St Eloi, have a well-recognised association, not to mention their having both been Apostles, cannot be dismissed as a coincidence, but is in itself an unexpected indication that the proposed identifications may be credible, to put it

no higher. To the medieval congregation St Philip and St James would moreover have the added attraction of both being martyrs, again unlike St Helena and St Eloi, but in the company of those favourite saints of English medieval wall-paintings, SS. Catherine, Christopher, George, and Margaret.

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